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Oriental Images of Otherness: Fashion Encounters in French Travelogues and Other Representations of the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, the Orient, particularly the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, were not alien spaces, but familiar realms, to the French people. Napoleon Bonaparte's (1769–1821) campaign in Egypt and Syria from 1798 to 1801 had a powerful impact on the French perception of the Orient. This was supplemented by information from travelogues, works of literature, historical treatises, as well as other (illustrated) publications, paintings, and etchings.¹

Orientalism, defined by Edward Said as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,”² was not absent as an expression of Western hegemony from nineteenth-century French visual and textual travel narratives. Said's analysis of the ideological foundation of European representations of Oriental otherness has been subject to debate and criticism.³ It has been suggested, for example, that in his study *Orientalism* (1978), he focused on the discursive and textual production of Oriental images, did not analyze the role of gender,⁴ and did not examine the representation of the Orient in Western art.⁵ Nevertheless, French travelers' descriptions and images of ethnic and religious groups do provide information on the characteristics of the Orient's exoti-

1 For explorations of Western fantasies and stereotypes about the Orient see Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (Basingstoke, London 1986).

2 Edward Said, whose seminal work *Orientalism*, starts with Bonaparte's campaign, argues that the West's dominant perception of the Orient is a stereotype of its own making. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1978), p. 3.

3 For more information on criticism of Said's *Orientalism* see Ali Behdad, *Orientalism after Orientalism*, in *L'Esprit Createur* 34/2 (1994), pp. 3–11; Fred Halliday, *Orientalism and its Critics*, in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1993), pp. 145–163.

4 On the role of gender see Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London, New York 1996); Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge, Mass. 1998); Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London 2004).

5 For a useful analysis of the production of French Orientalist painters see Christine Peltre, *Les orientalistes* (Paris 2018). For a general approach of Orientalism in art see also Roger Diederens and Davy Depelchin (eds.), *De Delacroix à Kandinsky: L'Orientalisme en Europe*, exhibition catalogue (Paris 2010).

cized otherness on the basis of various topics such as the outward appearance of its population.⁶ The analysis of travel literature and iconography usually reveals what the travelers saw and experienced during their journeys as well as their personal perception of otherness. However, their textual and visual production is not an objective evidence because “it is written from a perspective that reveals something of the traveler’s culture and ideology.”⁷ Nineteenth-century travelers do not only describe other places and people, they also express themselves. Percy Adams has argued that “the personal, subjective nature of [travel] literature has always been one of its chief and most endearing elements.”⁸ The visual and textual representation of the Orient’s ethnic and religious groups can also be studied in the context of imagology, an approach that analyzes the cultural construction and literary representation of ‘the other.’⁹ Moreover, as travel narratives are related to earlier literary conventions and models, they draw on previous writings and frequently repeat old information.¹⁰

This chapter explores, through nineteenth-century French travel writing and images, the contribution of representations of Oriental fashions to the construction of Oriental otherness. Throughout various case studies, we analyze textual and visual representations in an attempt to better understand their perception and use by French travelers. Their testimonies help us to acknowledge fashion as a form of cultural transfer between East and West.¹¹

6 Irini Apostolou, *L'apparence extérieure de l'Orient et son rôle dans la formation de l'image de l'Autre par les voyageurs français au XVIII^e siècle*, in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 66 (2003), pp. 181–200.

7 Nandini Das and Tim Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (Cambridge, UK et al. 2019), Introduction, p. 16.

8 Percy G. Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington 1983), p. 167.

9 For more details on the theoretical approach of “imagology” see Joep Leerssen, *Imagology: History and Method*, in Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (eds.), *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey* (Amsterdam, New York 2007), pp. 17–32. In his approach to the theory of imagology, Daniel-Henri Pageaux also focused on the contribution of the cultural context. Daniel-Henri Pageaux, *Une perspective d'étude en littérature comparée: L'imagerie culturelle*, in *Synthesis* 8 (1981), pp. 169–185; Daniel-Henri Pageaux, *L'imagerie culturelle: De la littérature comparée à l'anthropologie*, in *Synthesis* 10 (1983), pp. 79–88.

10 Isabelle Daunais considered that “For romantic travelers, travel is also a commemoration of past travels,” in *L'art de la mesure ou L'invention de l'espace dans les récits d'Orient (XIX^e siècle)* (Saint-Denis, Montréal 1996), introduction.

11 The concept of cultural transfer was developed by Michel Espagne. See in particular Michel Espagne, *La notion de transfert culturel*, in *Revue Sciences/Lettres* 1 (2013), accessed 4 April 2022, <<https://doi.org/10.4000/rsl.219>>.

Since the Renaissance, European costume books and travelogues had usually offered abundant information about local manners and customs to acquaint their readers with foreign cultures. In eighteenth-century French travelogues, chapters were repeatedly entitled “*moeurs et coutumes*” (mores and customs) and presented the daily life, the beliefs, and the dress of the population of the visited countries. Like other travelers of the time, French travelers, whose personal encounters with the local population were limited due to language and culture barriers, expressed in their accounts a particular interest in Oriental clothing with vivid descriptions based on their personal observations. The descriptions and representations of costumes in travelogues contributed to the identification of otherness and to the recognition of its cultural, social, and ethnic characteristics.¹² Nevertheless, despite the richness of the information provided on fashion and clothing items, travelogues do not capture the complexity of ‘the Oriental’ as an individual.¹³ Textual descriptions and commentaries in travelogues are not sufficiently enlightening and cannot always be used as ethnographic data by researchers. Furthermore, due to their general character or inaccuracy, many European pictures representing Ottoman fashion and sartorial habits, cannot be considered as a reliable visual source. Likewise, Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan claim that “it is best to see travel writing as pseudoethnographic,” insofar as it purports to provide a document of, or report on, other peoples and cultures while using them as a backdrop for the author’s personal quest.¹⁴ Suraiya Faruqi argues that the observations and images “produced by European travelers are often invaluable but must be used with due caution.” She adds that “as strangers, these people [travelers], were more likely than insiders to misunderstand the often subtle messages imparted by the clothes of people who at best they got to know but casually.”¹⁵ Travelogues do not always inform us about the wearer’s social class and the place where the clothes described had been viewed, nor do they mention their quality systematically. More-

12 For an analysis of the eighteenth-century iconography of Orientals see the fourth section in Irini Apostolou, *L’Orientalisme des voyageurs français au XVIII^e siècle: Une iconographie de l’Orient méditerranéen* (Paris 2009).

13 In eighteenth-century travelogues, travelers usually offered general outlines of the Orient’s ethnic, religious, and local groups. For more information about their personal encounters see Irini Apostolou, *Rencontrer l’Oriental dans les récits de voyages: Aperçus de l’altérité au siècle des Lumières*, in Gérard Ferreyrolles and Laurent Versini (eds.), *Le Livre du monde et le monde des livres: Mélanges à l’honneur de François Moureau* (Paris 2012), pp. 787–800.

14 Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor 1998), p. 12.

15 Suraiya Faruqi and Christoph K. Neumann (eds.), *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity* (Istanbul 2004), p. 17.

over, a costume cannot be studied without taking into account the body of the wearer and the gestures that are prevalent in every culture. However, in some cases, travelogues can be used as a secondary source in social, cultural, and material history as well as in the history of trade and consumption.

1 Costume books, travel illustration and portraits: an old tradition of Orientalist representations of fashion

Starting with the Renaissance, European readers were confronted with written or oral descriptions of Oriental clothes, in other words with verbal images. Many early modern travelogues included engravings representing Oriental dress. Furthermore, the genre of costume book, in manuscript or printed form, became very popular as it allowed the reader/spectator to travel to foreign countries via sartorial images, associated with specific geographical spaces.¹⁶ Travelogues were consumed by avid readers and “cross-pollinated with contemporary books of clothing and habits with which they sustained a rich symbolic relationship.”¹⁷ Images of Oriental costumes were either published as part of Renaissance travel accounts or in collections of world costumes. Sometimes, they were also used to indicate the relevant geographical area and allow the reader/spectator to associate the costume to a region or country. Moreover, he or she could compare the physical and sartorial characteristics of the various ethnic groups.¹⁸

Les Quatre premiers livres des navigations et pérégrinations orientales (1567–1568)¹⁹ written by the French geographer, and probably spy, Nicolas de Nicolay (1517–1583) was a commercial success.²⁰ Nicolay’s travelogue, translated in English, German, Flemish, and Italian comprises sixty plates representing the sul-

¹⁶ For an overview of costume books see Odile Blanc, *Images du monde et portraits d’habits: Les recueils de costumes à la Renaissance*, in *Bulletin du Bibliophile* 2 (1995), pp. 221–261.

¹⁷ Stephanie Leitch, *Visual Images in Travel Writing*, in Das and Youngs, *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, pp. 456–473, here p. 465.

¹⁸ Isabelle Paresys, *Apparences vestimentaires et cartographie de l’espace en Europe occidentale aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, in Isabelle Paresys (ed.), *Paraître et apparences en Europe occidentale du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq 2008), pp. 253–270, accessed 4 April 2022, <<https://doi.org/10.4000/books.septentrion.57573>>.

¹⁹ Nicolas de Nicolay, *Les Quatre premiers livres des navigations et pérégrinations orientales* (Lyon 1567–1568).

²⁰ David Brafman, *Facing East: The Western View of Islam in Nicolas de Nicolay’s ‘Travels in Turkey’*, in *Getty Research Journal* 1 (2009), pp. 153–160, here p. 153.

tan, a mufti, various soldiers and servants of the imperial court, as well as Ottoman women and Christian subjects. Its images of Oriental dress are presented as signifiers of ethnicity, and of religious and cultural heritage. Over the next three centuries, Nicolay's illustrated travelogue was an important inspiration for artists and writers.²¹

In the eighteenth century, the *Recueil de cent estampes représentant les diverses nations du Levant*,²² with plates engraved after the paintings by Jean-Baptiste Van Mour (1671–1737), which were commanded by Charles Ferriol (1652–1722), also became a valuable visual and textual resource for authors and artists who had not visited the Orient themselves.²³ Known as the *Recueil Ferriol* it documented especially the costumes and the way of life of the residents of the sultan's imperial household and the sultan's subjects. Sources like these were, for instance, used by Westerners who enjoyed dressing as Orientals in masquerades, used exotic fabrics and accessories,²⁴ or adapted elements and trends from Oriental costumes.²⁵

21 Marie-Christine Gomez-Géraud and Stéphane Yérasimos (eds.), *Dans l'empire de Soliman le Magnifique : Nicolas de Nicolay* (Paris 1989), Introduction, pp. 33–36.

22 Jacques Le Hay (ed.), *Recueil de cent estampes représentant les diverses nations du Levant, tirées d'après nature en 1707 et 1708 par les ordres de M. de Ferriol, ambassadeur du Roy à la Porte et gravées en 1712 et 1713 par les soins de Le Hay* (Paris 1714).

23 Further information on the *Recueil* by Ferriol can be found in Jeff Moronville, *Connaître et représenter l'Orient au siècle des Lumières: Le Recueil de cent estampes représentant différentes nations du Levant de Charles de Ferriol, 1714*, in Sophie Basch et al. (eds.), *Orientalisme, les Orientalistes et l'Empire ottoman: De la fin du XVIII^e siècle à la fin du XX^e siècle: Actes du colloque international réuni à Paris, les 12 et 13 février 2010 au Palais de l'Institut de France* (Paris 2011), pp. 61–79. See also Apostolou, *L'Orientalisme*, pp. 262–265, and Maria-Elisabeth Pape, *Die Turquerie in der Bildenkunst des 18. Jahrhunderts* (PhD dissertation, University of Cologne, 1987), pp. 305–319.

24 Onur Inal, *Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes*, in *Journal of World History* 22 (2011), pp. 243–272.

25 For the assimilation of Oriental styles in French fashion see Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas (eds.), *Fashion and Orientalism: Dress, Textiles and Culture from the 17th to the 21st century* (London 2013); Kendra Van Cleave, *The Desire to Banish Any Constraint in Clothing: Turquerie and Enlightenment Thought in the French Fashion Press, 1768–1790*, in *French Historical Studies* 43 (2020), pp. 197–221. For a general approach to Ottoman fashion in Europe see Charlotte A. Jirousek with Sara Catterall, *Ottoman Dress and Design in the West: A Visual History of Cultural Exchange* (Indiana 2019).

2 Travelers' Orientalist portraits

Drawn, painted, or photographed, portraits of travelers were conceived according to a codified system of representations which reinforced their power over knowledge about the Orient and their cultural hegemony.²⁶ Christine Riding argues that “cultural cross-dressing also represents an Orientalist’s desire for power over a Western audience, as a visual expression of his or her distinct experience, understanding, and authority.”²⁷ In the same approach, Gail Ching-Liang Low suggests that travelers’ cultural appropriation of a foreign culture passed through their representations of its clothing considering that “the visual and imaginative pleasure of stepping into another’s clothes forms one of the central legacies of orientalism.”²⁸ The adoption of Oriental dress could also reflect the sitter’s admiration for Oriental culture.²⁹

Many sitters chose to appear in Oriental attire bought during their travels, and the association with the Orient was often strengthened by real or imaginary geographies depicted in the background of the paintings. In Jean-Baptiste Tavernier’s (1605–1689) portrait by Nicholas de Largillière (1656–1746; portrait c. 1678, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Brunswick)³⁰ and in Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu’s (1689–1762) portraits in Turkish dress³¹ as well as in many travelers’ photographs, Oriental dress was imposed as an important element of the travel-

26 For more information on cross-dressing as the expression of cultural hegemony see Mary Roberts, *Cultural Crossings: Sartorial Adventures, Satiric Narratives and the Question of Indigenous Agency in Nineteenth-century Europe and the Near East*, in Jocelyn Hackforth-Jones and Mary Roberts (eds.), *Edges of Empire: Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Malden, MA et al. 2005), pp. 70–94.

27 Christine Riding, *Travellers and Sitters: The Orientalist Portrait*, in Nicholas Tromans (ed.), *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery (London 2008), pp. 48–75, here p. 48.

28 Gail Ching-Liang Low, *White Skins/Black Masks: The Pleasures and Politics of Imperialism*, in *New Formations* 9 (1989), pp. 83–103, here p. 83.

29 The European fascination with Ottoman culture is discussed by Haydn Williams in *Turquerie: An Eighteenth-Century European Fantasy* (London 2014).

30 For Tavernier’s portrait see Gereon Sievernich and Hendrik Budde (eds.), *Europa und der Orient* (Gütersloh, Munich 1989), p. 821, figure 895. For the use of Oriental dress in Tavernier’s travel account and images see Nina Trauth, *Maske und Person: Orientalismus im Porträt des Barock* (Munich 2009).

31 Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu accompanied her husband, Sir Edward Wortley-Montagu (1678–1761), who had been appointed ambassador to Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1716, through various Eastern European states before settling in Pera. In her portraits, Lady Mary appears either in her original Turkish costume or in a modified Turkish dress. See Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford 1999).

er's identity. Adopting cultural cross-dressing helped them to establish their authority as writers or artists producing an 'authentic' image of the Orient. Therefore, travelers' portraits in their Oriental costume can be perceived as examples of their Orientalist strategy as they asserted their superiority as Westerners and connoisseurs of the Orient through this medium.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, costume books and travelogues with information on Oriental fashion were very popular.³² Compared to the early modern production, nineteenth-century costume books have a stronger focus on the social and administrative hierarchy as well as on the religious and ethnic diversity as represented by a variety of Oriental characters ranging from the upper echelons of Ottoman society to ordinary men and women in Constantinople and in other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Frequently, these volumes present the same costumes, poses, and characters with minor changes, thus offering stereotyped images of the Orient. During their sojourn in the Ottoman Empire, especially in Constantinople, nineteenth-century visitors also purchased manuscript costume books, produced by European and local artists.³³

Travelogues and costume books were often used as visual sources by European artists and writers because they provided insights into the peculiarities of the outward appearance of the ethnic and religious groups represented. One prominent example of borrowing of textual and visual elements from travelogues is the *Turkish Bath* (*Le bain turc*, 1862, Fig.1) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), a painting largely inspired by Mary Wortley-Montagu's *Letters*. Wortley-Montagu informed her sister of her particular interest in Ottoman fashion and described her Turkish costume in detail.³⁴ Besides the general atmosphere of the hammam that was inspired by Wortley-Montagu's visits to the baths in Adrianople (Edirne), Ingres borrowed his two standing naked figures from a sixteenth-century print entitled *Turque allant au bain* (Fig. 2) which itself

³² See Apostolou, *L'Orientalisme*, pp. 260–277.

³³ For more information on the production of costume books in the Ottoman Empire see Gwendolyn Collaço, *Between Brush, Stone, and Copper: The Harvard Fulgenzi Album Mediating Print Techniques and Crosscurrents of the Press*, in Gwendolyn Collaço (ed.), *Prints and Impressions from Ottoman Smyrna: The Collection de costumes civils et militaires, scènes populaires, et vues de l'Asie-Mineure, Album (1836–38)* at Harvard University's Fine Arts Library. With historical comments by Evangelia Balta and Richard Wittmann (Bonn 2019), pp. 9–20.

³⁴ Mary Wortley Lady Montagu, Letter XXIX, in *Letters of the right honourable Lady M [...] y W [...] y M [...] e: written during her travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa, to persons of distinction, men of letters, &c. in different parts of Europe* (London 1784), pp. 149–150.

was based on a drawing by Nicolas de Nicolay published in his travelogue.³⁵ Contrary to the woman wearing an orange headdress, and the lady holding a blue cloth, who were represented naked by Ingres, the original etching actually depicts two fully dressed women, a Turkish lady and her servant, on their way to a Turkish bath.

Moreover, Ingres “undressed” one of the figures of the *Recueil* – originally wearing a light dress after her bath (Fig. 3) – to fit in the hammam group of naked ladies.³⁶ Ingres, a neoclassical artist, who never visited the Orient, preferred to use Renaissance and eighteenth-century travelogues and images for his Oriental paintings rather than contemporary written and visual sources. Nineteenth-century readers had access to contemporary illustrated travelogues and to costume books whose topics remained unchanged. Albums with scenes of daily life such as *La Turquie* (1846) by Camille Rogier (1810 – 1896) also comprise typical Oriental costumes.³⁷ Rogier was a draughtsman, painter, and engraver who, after being part of a literary and artistic circle in Paris, sojourned for several years in Constantinople. This sojourn and his several difficult trips to Smyrna (Izmir) and other parts of Asia Minor prior to his relocation to Beirut, introduced him to the particularities of the Ottoman society.³⁸

Rogier created narrative scenes for a French as well as for a European audience using the rhetoric and pictorial conventions that governed this genre to meet the expectations of his public. As *La Turquie*’s complete title suggests, it is an album about Ottoman life, whose picturesque compositions help the reader/spectator to identify the Orient’s ethnic groups and social classes. This album expresses a particular interest in the social, ethnic, and religious diversity of the Ottoman Empire that is also visible in the details of the outward appearance of the models represented (Fig. 4).

35 For more information on the sources of Ingres see the exhibition catalogue by Hélène Tousseint and Suzy Delbourgo, *Le Bain Turc d’Ingres: Étude au Laboratoire de recherche des musées de France, Musée du Louvre* (Paris 1971).

36 Gérard Jean Baptiste Scotin after Jean-Baptiste Van Mour, *Femme turque qui repose sur le sofa sortant du bain*, in *Le Hay, Recueil de cent estampes*, figure 46.

37 Camille Rogier, *La Turquie: Mœurs et usages des orientaux au dix-neuvième siècle. Scènes de leur vie intérieure et publique. Harem, bazars, cafés, bains, danses et musique, coutumes levantines*, etc. (Paris 1846).

38 Anne Morel-Besson, *Camille Rogier, peintre et illustrateur du XIX^e siècle* (master’s thesis [DEA], Paris-Sorbonne University 1995).

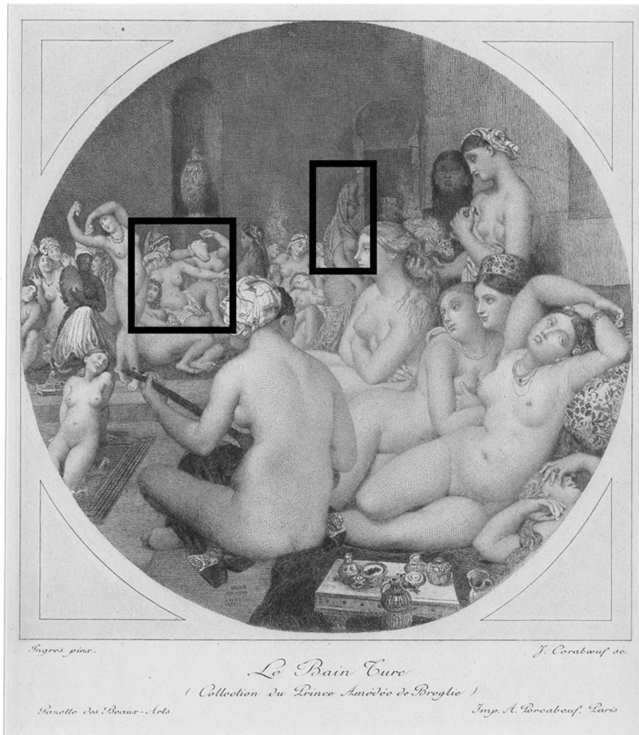


Fig. 1: Jean-Alexandre Coraboeuf after Ingres, *Le Bain turc* (Paris 1906).
Source: © Musée d'Arts de Nantes (Inv.: 1864).



Fig. 2: *Turque allant au bain*, in Nicolas de Nicolay, *Les quatre premiers livres des navigations et pérégrinations orientales* (Lyon 1567–1568), p. 40.

Source: © Gennadius Library, American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

3 Oriental fashion in travelogues: looking for the picturesque and the exotic

In French nineteenth-century travelogues, Oriental scenes are also enhanced by representations of ethnic and religious groups in exotic dress. Travelers' fascination with Oriental costumes is evident in the verbal depictions, as they describe

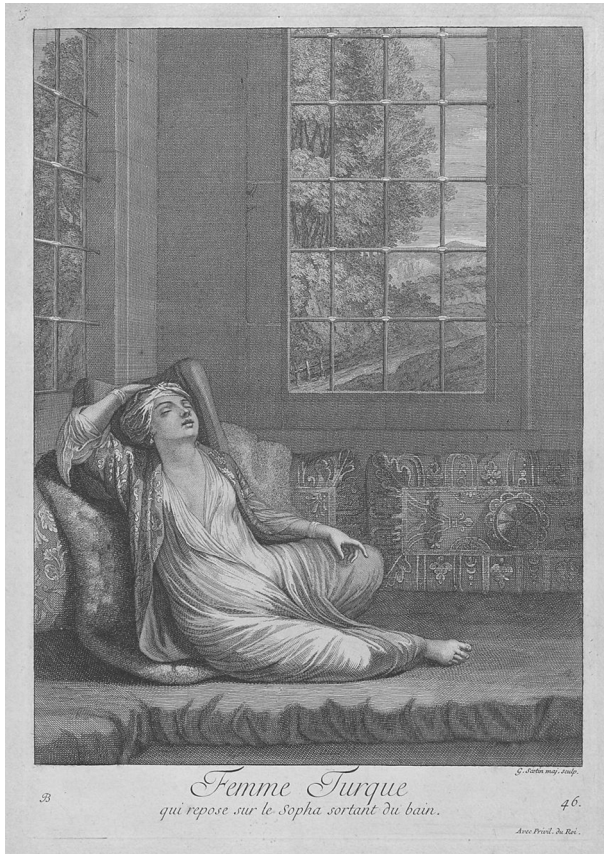


Fig. 3: Gérard Jean Baptiste Scotin after Jean-Baptiste Van Mour, *Femme turque qui repose sur le sofa sortant du bain*, in Jacques Le Hay (ed.), *Recueil de cent estampes représentant les diverses nations du Levant, tirées d'après nature en 1707 et 1708 par les ordres de M. de Ferriol, ambassadeur du Roy à la Porte et gravées en 1712 et 1713 par les soins de Le Hay* (Paris 1714), figure 46.

Source: © Gennadius Library. American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

their different elements and explain the ethnicity and religion of the persons wearing them. Romantic travelogues reflect their authors' strong interest in Oriental fashion although the information given is usually limited to general characteristics.³⁹ Alphonse de Lamartine's (1790–1869) travels to Greece, Lebanon,

³⁹ For a detailed analysis of romantic travel writers and their actual contacts with the local population in the Ottoman Empire see Sarga Moussa, *La relation orientale: Enquête sur la com-*



Fig. 4: Lithography after a drawing by Camille Rogier, *Écrivain public*, in Camille Rogier, *La Turquie : Mœurs et usages des orientaux au dix-neuvième siècle. Scènes de leur vie intérieure et publique. Harem, bazars, cafés, bains, danses et musique, coutumes levantines, etc.* (Paris 1846).

Source: © Gennadius Library. American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Syria, and the Holy Land in 1832–1833 nourished his reflections on exoticism and otherness. Although he discussed fashion mostly in general terms in his

munication dans les récits de voyage en Orient, 1811–1861 (Paris 1995); C. W. Thompson, *French Romantic Travel Writing: Chateaubriand to Nerval* (Oxford et al. 2012).

Souvenirs, impressions, pensées et paysages pendant un voyage en Orient (1832–1833) ou Notes d'un voyageur (1835), he sometimes, as in his textual portrait of the daughter of the vice-consul of Sardinia in Haifa, described the costumes in detail and created an enchanting image of otherness.

Her oriental costume added much to the charms of this young maiden's person. Her long light hair, which bordered on the golden auburn, was plaited in numberless tresses on her head, and fell over her uncovered shoulders [...]; her bosom was uncovered, according to the custom of the Arabian woman; a tunic of fine muslin embroidered with silver flowers, was fastened by a Cashmere shawl round her waist; her arms were passed through the floating sleeves, open to the elbow, of a vest of green tissue, whose sloping points hung gracefully below the hips wide pantaloons; filled with many plaits completed this costume, and her slender ankles were encircled by two bracelets of chased silver; one of these bracelets was ornamented with little round silver bells, whose musical sound accompanied each movement of her feet.⁴⁰

As an accomplished and celebrated author, Lamartine gave a vivid image of Oriental fashion without the help of illustration. His extensive description of the vice-consul daughter's Oriental costume and accessories, based on his direct observation, helps his readers to immerse themselves in the Oriental ambiance and corroborates his intercultural experience, adding a picturesque element to his travel account.

Six years later, in 1839, the Orientalist painter Horace Vernet (1789–1863) embarked in Marseille for a long journey in the company of his nephew Antoine Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet (1817–1878). During their travels in the Aegean Islands, Smyrna, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and their sojourn in Constantinople, they came into contact with various ethnic, religious, and professional groups that sometimes posed as models for their paintings.⁴¹ Some of the iconographic documentation gathered during their tour was published in Goupil-Fesquet's travelogue that records the daily life and impressions of the travelers.⁴² Although they visited and daguerreotyped mostly archaeological sites and monuments, Goupil-Fesquet's account is rich in information on the physical appearance of the population and the originality of its costumes. The *Voyage d'Horace Vernet en Orient*

⁴⁰ Alphonse de Lamartine, *A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: Comprising Recollections, Sketches and Reflections, made during a Tour in the East 1832–1833* (London 1836), vol. 1, pp. 363–364.

⁴¹ Sarga Moussa, *Le regard d'un artiste français sur l'Égypte ottomane: Le voyage en Orient de Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet (1839–1840)*, in Frédéric Hitzel (ed.), *14th International Congress of Turkish Art: Proceedings* (Ankara 2013), pp. 517–522.

⁴² Auguste Antoine Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d'Horace Vernet en Orient* (Paris 1843).

includes plates showing, through genre scenes and costume representations, the ethnic and religious diversity of the population they encountered.

Published during the establishment of cultural anthropology as scientific discipline, the *Voyage d'Horace Vernet en Orient* neglects the physical characteristics of the persons represented and focuses essentially on their costumes that probably were perceived as an important mark of identification. The plate *Grèce, Egypte, Syrie, Asie mineure, Turquie Physionomie de l'Orient*, despite its title, concentrates more on the costumes and skin color of groups represented on the same plate rather than on their facial features, allowing the reader/spectator to discover their variety in color and form. The plate, which depicts turbans and headdresses worn in the Orient, could be used as a visual source by professional artists (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5: Augustin Challamel after Auguste Antoine Goupil-Fesquet, *Les différentes formes du turban en Orient*, in Auguste Antoine Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d'Horace Vernet en Orient* (Paris 1843), p. 178.

Source: © Gennadius Library. American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855) sojourned in the Orient in 1843 in search for inspiration. Initially, he wanted to publish an illustrated travelogue proving that he

was a reliable observer, but he never realized his original project. Nevertheless, he composed many narrative scenes and vivid descriptions of Oriental life and customs. In his *Voyage en Orient* (1851), otherness is present in his depictions of ethnic, religious, and cultural differences as well as through Oriental fashion. The “charm and sensuality of Oriental women,” which is a major Nervalian theme, are particularly enhanced by their costumes. The descriptions of the dresses and accessories of the dancing girls of Cairo highlight their exoticism:

The first thing about them that struck me was the brightness of the golden caps upon their tresses [sic]. As their heels beat upon the ground, with a tinkle of little bells and anklets, their raised arms quivered in harmony; their hips shook with a voluptuous movement; their form seemed bare under the muslin between the little jacket and the low loose girdle, like the ceston of Venus.⁴³

In Syria, Nerval was fascinated by the headdress of his Maronite hostess, who was the wife of a shop owner in the Beirut bazaar. Nerval noted that she wore “upon her head a kind of cone draped with a shawl, which, with the tresses of long hair adorned with sequins, gives her the air of an Assyrian queen.”⁴⁴ Like other Europeans such as Lamartine and Henri Guys (1787–1878), the French consul in Beirut,⁴⁵ Nerval was impressed by the traditional high cone shaped headdress called *ṭanṭūr*, which was used mostly by married women belonging to the three Lebanese ethno-religious groups (Christian Maronite, Muslim, and Druze). This testimony is very important, because some years after Nerval’s visit, Lebanese women ceased to wear it. Josias Leslie Porter (1823–1889) mentions in 1889 that it was “until about twenty years ago they wore the most remarkable head-dress.”⁴⁶ As demonstrated here, illustrated travelogues use a different approach than the one adopted in costume books, as they inform their readers about the different aspects of Oriental fashion through text and image.

⁴³ Gérard de Nerval, *The Women of Cairo*, with an introduction by Conrad Elphinstone (New York et al. 1930), vol. 1, p. 64.

⁴⁴ Nerval, *The Women of Cairo*, vol. 1, p. 251.

⁴⁵ Henri Guys, *Beyrout et le Liban: Relation d’un séjour de plusieurs années dans ce pays, précédée d’une lettre de M. Poujoulat* (Paris 1850).

⁴⁶ Josias Leslie Porter, *Through Samaria to Galilee and the Jordan: Scenes of the Early Life and Labours of Our Lord* (London et al. 1889), p. 244.

4 Bazaars

Oriental goods and textiles were particularly appreciated in the West.⁴⁷ Traveling in the Orient was an occasion to buy authentic costumes and accessories. The bustle and color of the bazaars, which were central to the economy of the Ottoman cities, attracted European travelers in search of local and exotic products.⁴⁸ Their travelogues list bazaars' shops and the articles on sale, and offer information about their economic activity and commercial life as well as on the material culture of the area. Moreover, they present a vivid image of observers, customers, and shop owners engaged in discussions about Oriental clothing, jewelry, and accessories, thus providing the opportunity for the reader/spectator to study luxury and fashion items sold in these establishments as well as Europeans' preferences and choices.

Goupil-Fesquet, whose attention focused on the items sold in the bazaars, was also interested in fashion as a part of Oriental material culture. Costumes and everyday objects, sold in the Cairo bazaar, are depicted in the plate *Vêtements et objets usuels*. Moreover, the plate *Costume levantin moderne*, *Costume smyrniote moderne* represents two women, one wearing a costume bought in Damascus and one with an outfit from Smyrna worn in the past by the author's grandmother, thus offering readers/spectators a vivid illustration of the evolution of dress.

Being the ideal place to discover Oriental fashions, the bazaars encouraged the consumption of their merchandise in an exotic atmosphere. In the Cairo bazaar, where Nerval says that he bought Zeineb, a Javanese slave⁴⁹ who was central to his travel narrative, he also had the opportunity to observe and to admire clothing items, accessories, jewelry, furniture, and weapons. Moreover, during his visit to the famous grand bazaar in Constantinople, he admired the quantity and the quality of the fashion items exhibited: "Especially worthy of admiration are the dresses and slippers for women, the embroidered and pleated materials, shawls, carpets, furniture encrusted with gold, silver and mother-of-pearl, jewel-

⁴⁷ On the European consumption of manufactured goods see Maxine Berg, *Manufacturing the Orient. Asian Commodities and European Industry, 1500–1800*, in Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Prodotti e tecniche d'oltremare nelle economie europee, secc. XIII–XVIII. Atti della ventinovesima settimana di Studi*, 14–19 aprile 1997 (Florence 1998), pp. 228–244.

⁴⁸ Reinhold Schiffer discusses bazaars and their visitors: *Oriental Panorama: British Travellers in 19th Century Turkey* (Amsterdam et al. 1999), pp. 182–190.

⁴⁹ In reality, it was his traveling companion Théodore de Fonfrède (fl. c. 1843) who bought Zeyneb. See Madeleine Dobie, *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language and Culture in French Orientalism* (Stanford, Calif. 2001), pp. 121 and 144.

ry, and, more particularly, the weapons which are set out for sale in that part of the bazaar called *Besestain*.”⁵⁰

The exceptional richness of the bazaars of Constantinople and Cairo fascinated French travelers, who also visited bazaars in Ottoman provinces such as Aleppo, Beirut, and Damascus. In contact with a different philosophy of life, French travelers discussed the items’ display and the interaction between merchants and customers. Their enumeration of the products offered for sale recreates the exotic ambiance of the bazaars, encouraging the readers to consume the articles mentally.

5 Tradition vs. modernity

One of the tropes of the Orientalist discourse was the image of an unchanging Orient, which was also confirmed by the persistent image of its traditional fashion. The Oriental’s textual and visual representation in his traditional attire (*turban*, *şalvar*, *kaftan*, *cübbe*, or *yelek*) persisted even after the implementation of the Ottoman clothing reform by Sultan Mahmud II (1785–1839) in 1829, which was introduced to “replace ancient community and occupational signs of differentiation by dress.”⁵¹ The new dress code initially regulated the costume of imperial officials before establishing the fez as the national headdress for all religious communities and Western clothing for the Ottoman officials in 1832.

Stereotypical images of the local population in traditional dress prevailed in French travel accounts of the nineteenth century. During their journeys, travelers, who were looking for picturesque images, were often disappointed with the effects of Ottoman modernization. The gradual adoption of Western dress initially by officers and military personnel and then by the local population, mostly in Constantinople and in large urban centers, displeased foreign visitors in search of ‘authentic experiences.’ The Egyptian army’s military uniforms, for instance, drew the attention of Goupil-Fesquet, who gave in his travelogue a general overview of their various types as well as indication of their recent changes.⁵² To give his readers/spectators a precise description of the different items in the uniform, he also included a representation of the Egyptian Cavalry of Giza in its green uniform in a plate entitled *Cavalerie égyptienne*, *Gijeh*.

⁵⁰ Nerval, *The Women of Cairo*, vol. 2, p. 165.

⁵¹ Donald Quataert, *Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997), pp. 403–425.

⁵² Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d’Horace Vernet*, pp. 23–25.

In French travelogues, otherness is often understood through the lens of cultural and sartorial difference. Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), visiting Constantinople in 1852, recognized easily the various ethnic groups gathered in the great square of Top Hané during the Ramadan thanks to their attire. In *Constantinople* (1853), Gautier frequently compared his experience in the Ottoman capital to Parisian cultural life, a strategy that made it easier for his audience to understand his descriptions. The diversity of the Ottoman costumes is compared to that of costumes used in the “divertissement” *Gustave III, ou le Bal masqué* by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (1782–1871) which was presented for the first time on 27 February 1833 at the Paris Opera.⁵³

The bal-masqué in “Gustavus” does not exhibit a greater variety of costumes than the great square of Top-Hané in night of the Ramadan. The Bulgarians, with their huge overcoats and their fur-trimmed caps seem not to have changed their dress since leaving the banks of the Danube; Circassians with their slender waists and expanded chests; Georgians with short frocks girt by a metal belt, and patent leather caps; Arnaouts, wearing embroidered sleeveless jackets over their bare chests; Jews, distinguished by their robes open at the sides and their black skull caps bound with blue handkerchiefs; Greeks of the islands with their ample trousers, crimson sashes, and tarbouches with silken tassels.⁵⁴

Although the comparison between the costumes of a masked ball and the reality of Ottoman clothes reduces to some extent the reliability of Gautier’s description, it gives nevertheless a vivid image of his perception of Ottoman fashion. He was also interested in the Westernization of women’s dress. In his description of women from the Christian minorities in Smyrna, Gautier complains that unfortunately “the local costume stops there; a dress of Lyons silk, and a shawl worn in the European fashion, completes the costume.” More apparent in Smyrna and in the European part of Constantinople, Western fashion was not adopted in Scutari, which was inhabited mostly by Muslims: “The ancient peculiarity of costume, the overhanging turban, the long pelisse, and the light-colored caftan, are much more frequent here than in Istamboul [sic] proper. The ‘Reform’ seems not to have penetrate to Scutari.”⁵⁵

Travelers’ narratives as well as illustrated accounts and costume books allow us to follow the propagation of clothing reform in the Ottoman Empire. The grad-

⁵³ Robert Ignatius Letellier argues that *Gustave III, ou le Bal masqué* by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber was performed 168 times until 1853. See Robert Ignatius Letellier, *The Ballets of Daniel-François-Esprit Auber* (Cambridge 2011), introduction pp. xviii–xx.

⁵⁴ Théophile Gautier, *Constantinople of Today*, translated by Robert Howe Gould (London 1854), p. 98.

⁵⁵ Gautier, *Constantinople of Today*, p. 147.

ual replacement of the traditional Ottoman dress with European styles, which was perceived as an expression of the Ottoman's Empire Westernization, disappointed many travelers who were in search of otherness and cultural difference. Oriental dress as a sign of otherness served the East-West dichotomy in the era of colonial empires.

6 Cross-dressing: practical necessities and ethnomasquerade

In their textual and visual images, French travelers of the first half of the nineteenth century usually defined Orientals as the opposite of themselves using, among other strategies, costume descriptions to satisfy the public's expectations of the picturesque and the exotic. Travelers adopted Oriental costume principally for practical reasons because it enabled them to mingle unnoticed with local people and to travel without drawing attention. Travelers, who were passing as Muslims, were permitted entry to mosques and other places forbidden to Christians. Their Western clothing was in general perceived as a cultural barrier restricting their access to Oriental society, which had its own codes.⁵⁶

François-René de Chateaubriand (1768–1848), in his travelogue *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811), besides some references to Ottoman sartorial style, does not discuss fashion at length. However, he mentions that Ali Aga (around 1806), governor of Jericho, obliged them to “relinquish [their] Arabian attire, and resume the French dress; that dress, once so despised by the Orientals [which] now inspires respect and fear.”⁵⁷ In his travelogue, donning the French costume becomes synonymous with France's political and cultural superiority in the Orient and in particular in the Holy Land, which was his principal destination.

Travelers' comments on their use of Oriental dress also offer new insights into diplomatic relations and the reception of Europeans in the Ottoman provinces. After informing his readers about the hostility of the population of Damascus towards the British vice-consul, Lamartine explained that his group

⁵⁶ Dúnlaith Bird argues that “Clothing, as Eberhardt and Nerval demonstrate, can be both a cultural barrier which prevents the traveler from seeing clearly and a visual passport for those who wish to vagabond.” Dúnlaith Bird, *Travelling in Different Skins: Gender Identity in European Women's Oriental Travelogues, 1850–1950* (Oxford 2012), p. 138.

⁵⁷ René de Chateaubriand, *Travels in Greece, Palestine, Egypt and Barbary: During the Years 1806 and 1807*, translated by Frederic Shobers (Philadelphia 1813), p. 261.

was clad in the “strictest Turkish fashion” because “the arrival of a European in the Frank costume would be the signal of a fresh rising.”⁵⁸

If cross-dressing helped travelers to avoid problems linked to their Western identity during their peregrinations, it seems that the practice also responded to their need for immersing themselves into the culture and adopting, even for a short time, a different cultural identity.⁵⁹ Travelers’ temporary adoption of cross-cultural and cross-dressing practices, as in the case of Horace Vernet,⁶⁰ is defined by Kader Konuk as *ethnomasquerade*.⁶¹ Nevertheless, in the case of long sojourns or permanent establishment, such as the establishment of Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope (1776–1839) in Lebanon, the use of Oriental fashion indicates the wearer’s social and cultural integration in the community. Lamartine was particularly impressed with Stanhope who was wearing “a white turban, on her forehead a little fillet of purple wool falling on each side of the head upon the shoulders [...] a long shawl of yellow cashmere and an immense Turkish robe of white silk, with flowering sleeves.”⁶² Lamartine’s picturesque portrait contributed to Stanhope’s already established reputation in Europe.⁶³ Textual information provided by Lamartine and other travelers concerning her cross-dressing is apparently the source of Stanhope’s imaginative portrait representing her on a divan, wearing her Oriental dress and a turban and holding a chibouk, a long-stemmed tobacco pipe (Fig. 6).⁶⁴

Travelers’ adoption of the Oriental costume as well as of habits and manners such as sitting cross-egged, drinking coffee, and smoking, was the expression of

58 Alphonse de Lamartine, *Travels in the East Including a Journey in the Holy Land* (Edinburgh 1839), p. 122.

59 On the use of cultural cross-dressing in Orientalist paintings see for example Tara Mayer, *Cultural Cross Dressing: Posing and Performance in Orientalist Portraits*, in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, series 3, 22 (2012), pp. 281–298.

60 For his portrait in Oriental attire see *Costume de M^r Horace Vernet pendant son voyage*, in Goupil-Fesquet, *Voyage d’Horace Vernet*, p. 117.

61 Kader Konuk defines *ethnomasquerade* as “the performance of an ethnic identity through the mimicking of clothes, gestures, appearance, language, cultural codes, or other components of identity formation.” Kader Konuk, *Ethnomasquerade in Ottoman-European Encounters: Re-enacting Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, in *Criticism* 46 (2004), pp. 393–414.

62 Lamartine, *Travels in the East*, p. 41.

63 For a documented biography of Lady Hester Stanhope and her unconventional life see Kirsten Ellis, *Star of the Morning: The Extraordinary Life of Lady Hester Stanhope* (London 2008).

64 Her imaginative portrait in Eastern dress by the illustrator Robert Jacob Hamerton (fl. 1831–1858) was lithographed by Charles Joseph Hullmandel (1789–1850) in the 1830s. Stanhope’s lithographed portrait is kept in the National Portrait Gallery in London. It is also used as frontispiece of Frank Hamel, *Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope: A New Light on Her Life and Love Affairs* (Cassel 1913).



Fig. 6: Lithography by Robert Jacob Hamerton, printed by Charles Joseph Hullmandel, published by Richard Bentley, *Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope*, after c. 1830s.
Source: © National Portrait Gallery, London.

their desire to don another's identity and to observe a foreign culture and space without being observed.

Nerval chose to stay in the Copt quarter of Cairo, took the Arabian costume, and had his head shaved in order to discover the real Oriental life.⁶⁵ Oriental dress could also blur the gender divide. Nerval described the Arabian robes offered for sale in the bazaar of Cairo as “things so seductive as to in man a feeling of excite coquetry entirely feminine.”⁶⁶ Nerval's remarks on the feminine sensations produced by the Arabian dress reveal the cultural and gender differences

⁶⁵ For more information on the literary construction of Nerval's encounter with otherness see Aki Taguchi, *Nerval, recherche de l'autre et conquête de soi: Contribution au suivi d'une genèse du "Voyage en Orient"* (Bern 2010).

⁶⁶ Gérard de Nerval, *The Women of Cairo* (2 vols., New York et al. 1930), vol. 2, p. 66.

between East and West as expressed by fashion. In the Ottoman Empire the link between male fashion and national identity was a complex topic. Conservative cycles rejected the adoption of European fashion and “urban, upper-class men were frequently ridiculed because of their predilection of western commodities, especial clothes.”⁶⁷ Cross-cultural dressing helped travelers to assume a different identity and to circulate easily in the Orient. Moreover, donning the Oriental costume gave them the opportunity to better understand ethnic, cultural, and religious otherness.

Epilogue

Published travel accounts and costume engravings played a vital role in the circulation of knowledge between different cultural universes. Fashion was an important component of exoticism and was significant for the French perception of the Orient and its populations. In the second half of the nineteenth century, new methods of studying human society were developed in the context of the foundation of scientific societies such as the Anthropological Society of Paris (1859). The work of anthropologists and ethnographers gradually replaced the empirical work of travelers and amateur scientists producing images of ethnic costumes that are in general perceived as an external marker of ethnicity.⁶⁸ Moreover, photography was used initially by Europeans and later by locals to represent the different ethnicities of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹ Albums such as Charles Lallemand’s (1857–1938) *Galerie universelle des peuples* (1865) comprised images of ‘ethnic types’ of Egypt and Syria that were mostly identified by their dress. Victor

⁶⁷ Katja Jana, *Changing Heads and Hats: Nationalism and Modern Masculinities in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey*, in Pablo Dominguez Andersen and Simon Wendt (eds.), *Masculinities and the Nation in the Modern World: Between Hegemony and Marginalization* (Basingstoke 2015), pp. 217–242, p. 224.

⁶⁸ Eminent French anthropologists such as Ernest Chantre (1843–1924) and Louis Charles Émile Lortet (1836–1909) used photography during their travels in the Orient. For more information on the relationship between anthropology and photography in nineteenth century France see Pierre-Jérôme Jehel, *Une illusion photographique: Esquisse des relations entre la photographie et l’anthropologie en France au XIXe siècle*, in *Journal des anthropologues* 80–81 (2000), pp. 47–70. See also Elizabeth Edwards (ed.), *Anthropology and Photography, 1860–1920* (New Haven, London 1994).

⁶⁹ For the use of photography in the representation of locals in the Orient see Ken Jacobson, *Odaliques & Arabesques: Orientalist Photography, 1839–1925* (London 2007), chapter 4, “Growth of Skilled Imagery of Local People 1870–79”, pp. 43–52, and chapter 9, “Social Documentation in the East”, pp. 77–84.

Marie de Launay's (b. 1822/1823) *Les Costumes populaires de la Turquie* (1873) reproduced Pascal Sébah's (1823–1886) photographs and used them as a medium to distribute images of various ethnic groups in their traditional attire.⁷⁰ In current research on French travelogues, costume descriptions are an important source for understanding the mechanisms of the construction of Oriental identity and the categorization of its various ethnic and religious groups. Researchers considering them as secondary documentary sources see travelers' textual and visual material as offering information about various topics such as the integration of foreigners in Oriental societies or the increasing influence of European fashion on Ottoman society.

⁷⁰ Ahmet Ersoy, A Sartorial Tribute to Tanzimat Ottomanism: the Elbise-i Osmaniyye Album, in *Muqarnas* 20 (2003), pp. 187–207.

